

MARRIAGE AMONG /KUNG BUSHMEN

359

tion is not necessary. 'A wife can get tired of loving her husband', we were told, ⁵⁸⁶
'and just tell him to go away.'

We learned about seven divorces only in our sample. The middle-aged Khuan//a, the mother of the bridegroom, /Gunda, had left her first husband to marry her lover. Another middle-aged woman left her husband because he was on the point of marrying a second wife. Jealousy between the two young wives at Gam, lamented in song by the young husband, had been the cause of the third. The whims of young girls caused others. A girl named /Ungka, married to a considerably older man, hated him though he was good to her and gave her oil and ornaments for her hair. She cut off her hair and threw it, ornaments and all, into the fire. She thrust her head into the ashes and made herself filthy. In another instance, the girl took offence the first night of her marriage and left her young husband next day, to his painful chagrin. The lenient and patient parents of these girls arranged other marriages. Di/ai, the mother of the bride /Nai, and now the wife of Gao, the medicine man in Band 1, was divorced from two former husbands in her youth. And /U, her sister, while still very young had been persuaded by ≠Toma to leave her tall young husband from Gam and to marry him. ⁵⁸⁷

Our data on frequency of divorce are too scant to be significant. We have merely the impression that there seems to be some tendency for couples to separate while they are young and in whatever adolescent turbulence the /Kung experience, but that, on the other hand, there is considerable stability in marriage once a compatible mate is found. At least, no divorces occurred between 1952 and 1959 in eight of the bands of our sample. We lack data on the others.

Young children of divorced parents remain with the mother. As they grow to adolescence the girls usually stay with their mothers, the boys may go to their fathers or stay with their mothers or spend some time with each.

Although the /Kung do not consider divorce reprehensible, they deplore it. Divorce is untoward, disruptive; it can cause trouble. Anything other than peace and harmony in human relations makes the /Kung uneasy. ⁵⁸⁸

Extra-marital sexual relations

Murdock points out that 'Our own culture includes a blanket taboo against fornication, an over-all prohibition of all sexual intercourse outside of the marital relationship.'¹ He goes on to say that our society is highly aberrant in this and that 'from available evidence [however] it seems unlikely that a general prohibition of sex relations outside of marriage occurs in as many as five per cent of the peoples of the earth'.²

/Kung society has an over-all prohibition against any sexual relations outside of marriage with one exception. It makes no requirements such as sexual hospitality or *jus primae noctis*. It makes no provision for sexual access to certain categories of kin or affines outside of marriage, such as BrWi. Premarital unchastity, unchastity of widows, and prostitution are not among their social conventions. But /kamheri, though not required, is either fully permitted or tolerated as not a very bad thing; I never reached certainty as to which of these attitudes the society adopted. ⁸³⁷ ⁸³⁶

/Kamheri means that two men may agree to exchange wives temporarily, provided

¹ Murdock, op. cit., p. 263.

² Ibid., p. 264.

/156 cont./

584 The betrothal, which takes place immediately before the couple move into the man's pontok, is regarded as concluded when the man seizes the girl's wrist, as can be seen in Photograph 44. Since, however, "betrothal" and "marriage" are separated only by the walk to the hut, the seizing of the bride's forearm may be regarded as concluding the marriage.

The seizing of the forearm is a fairly violent gesture, and on the way to the hut the bride allows herself in a certain sense to be dragged along. Could it be that this perhaps represents a vestige of an earlier custom of abducting the woman?

606 It is curious how the relationship of the son-in-law to his mother-in-law changes after the marriage. The former avoids the company of his mother-in-law and does not sit down with her. If, for instance, he approaches the campfire with the obvious intention of sitting down in front of it, the mother-in-law will go away. If he is absolutely forced to discuss something with her, they yell at each other from a great distance.

● 836 Premarital sexual intercourse scarcely seems to occur.

163 I noted that most women had two or three children who were about two to three years apart (see p. 5).

591 The woman goes to the family or settlement of her husband, not the other way around. The fact that the young couple stays for some time in the settlement of the wife's parents, roughly until the first child is born, may have given rise to error. Later on, the couple always returns to the man's horde.

582 A man may not marry his own sister and likewise, naturally, neither his mother nor daughter. Other degrees of relationship constitute no absolute obstacle to marriage.

As a rule, however, one does not marry within his own family and, if possible, not even within his own horde. Preferably women are brought in from far away, often from groups speaking another language (Naroon, Genkuin, Hei-um [Heikum]).

851 The birth of a child does not necessitate a temporary separation of the marriage partners.

684
837 Marital fidelity seems to be observed to a fair extent. The adulterer is killed, and the wife is treated according to the temperament of the deceived husband, that is, she is given a more or less violent beating.

[63 cont.]

252 hot, the ashes and fire are taken out, the melons are placed in the hot soil, and the glowing ashes are thrown on them. The next morning the tsama are ready.

301 The largest ostrich egg beads are produced by the Masarwa.

532 Their dance masks are made with pods and cocoons, and
535 sometimes also small hide balls filled with little rattle stones.

323 They still know the art of pottery. White or red body painting is
302 customary.

304 A Bushman tribe at Ngami Lake is supposed to have the custom of removing the last joint of the little finger.

278 Dornan mentions the following medicines of the Masarwa; for black water fever, Anacampseros rhodesica; dysentery, Monsonia ovata and Euclea lanceolata. Other medicines: Cannabis sativa, Solanum nigrum, Lippia asperifolia, Crotalaria burkeana, Pterocarpus angolensis, Datura stramonium, Indigifera senegalensis, Bauhinia reticulata.

752 The Masarwa claim that they can only treat the bite of the puff adder. The body of the Lygosoma sundervalli is charred, and the powder is sprinkled into the wound. Every snake is killed, and
(751) its head crushed. Reportedly there are also inoculations against snakebite.

595 According to Dornan, monogamy prevails among the
836 Masarwa. Sexual intercourse before marriage is prohibited, and
684 incest and adultery are punishable by death. As a rule, the consent of the girl is necessary for marriage; it is generally sufficient if the suitor presents his father-in-law with a head of big game.

584 The hunting test is customary only among the Wankie Bushmen and those of Bulalima. One may marry a girl from the same clan.

582 Among those tribes that are totemistically influenced, one may not marry a person of the same totem. Circumcision is practiced.
304 As soon as the boys and girls are about 12 years old, circumcision
681 takes place, for which a stone knife is used. In the case of the girls, the clitoris is pierced with a stone point. Sexual intercourse
(836) between the uncircumcised is strictly prohibited. Occasionally the nasal septum is pierced at the boys' initiation. As among the

761 Bantu, every death is explained as sorcery by human enemies. In

764 olden times the dead were supposedly thrown into the bush;

178 nowadays they are sometimes buried in a crouching position in

FAVIN
NAGAU

[72 cont.] THE SUITOR

584 brings his future parents-in-law presents in the form of game and
[583] veldkost, sometimes for more than a year. If matters go smoothly,
[585] he takes the girl to his hut after a while, and the marriage is re-
garded as concluded. If, in spite of her parents' consent, the girl
refuses to marry the man (she is entitled to state her wishes and by
no means always follows her parents' desires), the young man
684 finally takes the girl forcibly into his hut. Should a man do vio-
lence to a girl without the consent of her parents, he would be



Fig. 26. Nagau Girl in Festive
Finery of Ostrich Egg Beads
(Girls' Initiation).

585 killed. There are no special ceremonies when the marriage is
concluded. The engagement, undertaken before the couple
settles in the man's pontok, is regarded as concluded when the
man seizes the girl around her wrist. Since, however, the "en-
gagement" and "wedding" are separated in time only by the walk
to the hut, the grasping of the bride's lower arm may be regarded
as concluding the marriage. [Fig. 26 appears here.] The seizing
of the lower arm is done rather violently, and on the walk to the
hut the bride allows herself to be dragged along to a certain extent.
686 It is curious to note how the relationship of the son-in-law to his
mother-in-law changes after the marriage. The former avoids
his mother-in-law's company and does not sit with her. For ex-
ample, when he approaches the campfire with the obvious inten-
tion of sitting down in front of it, the mother-in-law goes away.
If it is absolutely necessary for him to discuss something with her,
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276 smoke sucked through the water by deep breaths into the lungs. A somewhat similar form of pipe is found among the Heikum and the Kung, but apparently water is not used here in smoking. Further east, among the Hiechware, a method of ground-smoking is found similar to that obtaining among the neighbouring Bantu peoples. A small hole is made in the ground, into which the man puts the tobacco; he then inserts his pipe-stick through a small tunnel and smokes.¹

[171] Dagga is mixed with tobacco or smoked by itself whenever obtainable. The habit is said seriously to affect those addicted to it, both physically and morally. When taken in slight quantities the herb has no visible ill-effects, but excessive indulgence is most deleterious to the health, and if persisted in sometimes causes mental aberration and frenzy.

273 Few of the Bushmen know how to make any kind of liquor themselves. The only exception, perhaps, are the Namib Bushmen, who, after the manner of their Hottentot neighbours, brew a kind of mead out of honey. They are very partial to this drink, which plays an essential part in all their festivities.² The other Bushmen in general also do not seem to trade for any liquor, although they all appreciate alcohol and native beer when it is given to them. The Hiechware, however, are said to be excessively fond of native beer, which they obtain by barter from the BeChwana; and, according to Dornan, they contrive to get drunk whenever they can.³ Drunkenness as a rule is very exceptional among the rest of the Bushmen.

SEXUAL LIFE AND MARRIAGE

Conditions and Forms of Marriage

114 There is very little information about the relations of the sexes before marriage. Either the subject is not mentioned at all by our authorities, or it is curtly dismissed in a short sentence. Kaufmann, for instance, reports of the Auen merely that prenuptial intercourse hardly ever seems to occur⁴; Lebzelter writes of the Kung that chastity is insisted upon before marriage⁵; while, on the other hand, all Miss Bleek has to say in this connection about the Naron is that

¹ Sparrman, *Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope*, I, 164 sq.; Stow, *Native Races of S. Africa*, 121; Werner, "Ueber die Heikum- und Kungbuschleute," 157; Dornan, *Pygmies and Bushmen*, 122-3.

² Trenk, "Buschleute der Namib," 168; Seydel, "Aus der Namib," 104.

³ Op. cit., 121.

⁴ Op. cit., 156.

⁵ Op. cit., (18).

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the women told her "a girl may do as she pleases, but a married woman may not".¹ And again Dornan writes of the Hiechware: "Sexual intercourse by the lovers before marriage, though looked upon as wrong, is very often indulged in."² Vague generalizations such as these really tell us next to nothing about the nature of sexual life before marriage; they simply ignore the many important sociological problems connected with the whole question of courtship and selection, social attitude towards prenuptial unchastity, legitimacy, and marriage.

Similarly Trenk says that the girls among the Namib Bushmen are generally virgins when they enter into marriage, because most of them marry soon after puberty.³ But that premarital unchastity does actually occur is shown by his statement in another context that the children born to an unmarried woman are taken over and looked after by the man she subsequently marries, although as soon as they grow up they must be returned to their real father.⁴ This implies that physiological paternity is acknowledged by these Bushmen, and that marriage is not necessary to legalize the status of children. The latter implication at least is at variance with what is known of other Bushmen, and needs to be confirmed. Among the Heikum, for example, abortion is sometimes practised by unmarried women who are pregnant, or, when "illegitimate" (i.e. prenuptial) births occur, the children are usually buried alive.⁵ Here, therefore, marriage would seem to be an essential preliminary to the right to procreate and rear children, and therefore to the foundation of the family.

A family is constituted by a union between one man and one or more women, this union being legalized by marriage. The Cape Bushmen are now said to be monogamous,⁶ but polygynous marriages also have been recorded by earlier writers.⁷ The Namib Bushmen, according to Trenk, are monogamous; Seydel, on the other hand, curtly remarks that both polygyny and polyandry occur!⁸ There is no other mention of polyandry among any of the Bushmen, and the statement can hardly be accepted as accurate without full confirmation. The more northerly tribes all permit polygyny, although the frequency of such marriages varies. Among the Naron at Sandfontein monogamy

¹ Op. cit., 32.² Op. cit., 128.³ Op. cit., 169.⁴ Ibid., 168.⁵ Fourie, "Bushmen of S.W. Africa," 94.⁶ D. F. Bleek, *The Mantis*, ix; *idem*, "Bushman Terms of Relationship," 62.⁷ Barrow, *Travels in S. Africa*, i, 275; Campbell, *Second Journey into S. Africa*, i, 30; Stow, *Native Races of S. Africa*, 95.⁸ Trenk, op. cit., 168; Seydel, op. cit., 105: "Vielmännerei und Vielweiberei wird beobachtet."